IRE Chavara, Kerala

2591. SHRI N. K. PREMACHANDRAN : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether any proposal to commence joint venture industries with any private companies or multinational companies is pending with IRE Chavara in Kerala;

(b) if so, the details thereof :

(c) whether Government propose to entertain such joint venture industries with IRE Chavara; and

(d) the reaction of Government thereto ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ATOMIC ENERGY [(SHRIMATI) VASUNDHARA RAJE)] : (a) and (b) Indian Rare Earth Limited (IREL), a Public Sector Undertaking of Department of Atomic Energy has received a proposal to form a Joint Venture (JV) from M/s. Cochin Minerals and Rutile Limited (CMRL) a private sector company of Kerala for setting up a Mining and Mineral Separation Plant based on Chavara/Kayamkulam deposits to produce about, 1,00,000 tpa of ilmenite along with other associated minerals.

(c) and (d) In tune with the general policy of decontrol and liberlisation the Government of India *vide* Resolution of 6th October, 1998 has notified a modified policy on exploitation of beach sand minerals, according to which wholly owned Indian companies are allowed to engage in mining and mineral separation activities after obtaining requisite mining lease from the State Government concerned and a licence from the Department of Atomic Energy. Similarly Joint Venture Companies (including with foreign direct investment upto 74%) are also allowed to set up facilities for value addition to the minerals or integrated facilities for mining, mineral separation and value addition.

Payment of Telephone Bills in Lower Koti Sub-Post Office, Shimla

†2592. SHRI ANIL SHARMA : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government have made any arrangements for payments of telephone bills in Lower Koti sub-post office for the convenience of the subscribers of the Lower Koti telephone exchange in Shimla district;

†Original notice of the Question was received in Hindi.

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR) : (a) to (c) Lower Koti is not a sub-post office, but is only a branch Post Office. Branch Post Offices are not authorised for collection of telephone bills under the existing policy of the Department of Posts.

Extension of distance of local calls

†2593. SHRI ANIL SHARMA : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government propose to extend distance of local calls in view of modern technology;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR) : (a) and (b) Sir, at present there is no proposal to enhance distance slab for local call facility.

(c) (i) The local call facility is currently being allowed for calls made anywhere in Short Distance Charging Area (SDCA), which is generally co-terminus with a tehsil. The local call facility is also extended to the calls made to adjoining SDCA.

(ii) Further, with a view to promote community of interest, the charges for intra-circles STD calls of distance above 50 Kms and upto 200 Kms have already been reduced with effect from 26-1-2000. The call charges for distances 50-100 Kms and 100-200 Kms are now 1/8th and 1/2 respectivel of the earlier rates.

(iii) As local call facility is already being provided over quite a long distance and intra-circle call charges have also been reduced, there is no proposal at present to review the existing facility.

STD/ISD/PCO Booths in Arunachal Pradesh

2594. SHRI NABAM REBIA : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) the details of the applications for providing STD/ISD/Telephones and PCO booths in all the telecom circles of Arunachal Pradesh pending with Government during the last two years; and

(b) the steps taken by Government in this regard ?

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.